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Presbytery of the Peaks: [www.peakspresbytery.org](http://www.peakspresbytery.org)  
Synod of the Mid-Atlantic: [www.synatlantic.org](http://www.synatlantic.org)  
Presbyterian Church (USA): [www.pcusa.org](http://www.pcusa.org)  
Pby. Disaster Assistance: [www.pcusa.org/pda/](http://www.pcusa.org/pda/)  
Presbyterian Today: [www.pcusa.org/pcusa/today](http://www.pcusa.org/pcusa/today)  
Pby. News Service: [www.pcusa.org/pcusa/brief.hem](http://www.pcusa.org/pcusa/brief.hem)



*Join us for a cup  
of coffee every Sunday  
morning in the kitchen  
before Church School*

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STEEPLE VIEWS



# STEEPLE VIEWS

First Presbyterian Church

December, 2007

Martinsville, Virginia

## **From My Perspective Within The Kingdom**

During our first year of marriage, Monica and I were invited to have dinner with a couple and their two small children at their home. We went and spent a delightful evening with this family, who belonged to the Trinity Presbyterian Church in Austin, TX that I attended and served all three years I was in seminary. The food was delicious and the conversation around the table was both rich and warm. As we were headed out the door, I said, "This has been such a wonderful time. How can we ever repay you?" The husband's response went like this: "When Nancy and I were newly married, a couple invited us over to dinner and we enjoyed our time with them very much. We too asked how we could ever repay them and they said we could repay them by doing this same thing for someone else and so we have." He went on to say, "If you want, you can repay us by inviting others into your home and sharing Christian friendship with them. "With those gracious words still ringing in our ears thirty-two-plus years later, Monica and I (and our children) would like to invite our church family, friends, and neighbors to our home on Friday, December 28, for an Open House from 3:00-7:00 p.m. This will be our third Open House in the six years we have lived here in Martinsville, and we are really looking forward to sharing good home-cooked food, laughter, and joy with many others. We have been so richly blessed and, in turn, we want to share our home with others lots of others! Please be sure to write this down on your calendar right away: Friday, December 28th, 3:00-7:00 p.m., Open House at the Stevens' home at 104

Courtney Terrace in Martinsville. Here are the directions: come down Sam Lions Trail from Mulberry, go around Lake Lanier to the left, pass by Hunting Ridge on the left, and when Sam Lions Trail makes a right hand turn it becomes Country Club Drive; Courtney Terrace is the only cul de sac on the right, and we are the first house on the right. We hope you will help us "repay" our friends in Austin, Texas, by coming to our home and sharing in our joy and gratitude for your friendship. Please, please just bring yourselves (no gifts!). As we anticipate this festive gathering with our church family and other friends in the community, I am especially mindful of the Prologue in John's Gospel. St. John uses beautiful, poetic language to describe the incarnation (God taking on human flesh) in the person of Jesus. In John 1:14 we read that "the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory of a father's only son, full of grace and truth (NRSV). The KJV states "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." Someone has suggested that another rendering would be that God took on human flesh and "pitched his tent right alongside of ours." And, Eugene Peterson, in *The Message*, proclaims, "The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood." At any rate, Jesus came to be with us, to make his home with us, in order that he could bring us home to God. Thus, it seems highly appropriate that we open our home to you and share in joyous fellowship in Jesus' name and for his sake.

May you and yours have a blessed spiritual journey through Advent and Christmas. And, don't forget the Stevens' family will be looking for you to show up at our house and share the

warmth, laughter, and good eats of our home on Friday, December 28.

In Christ's love,  
Randy

**A Word from the Associate Pastor:**

In September, I shared with you my hope that our congregation could focus on prayer, Bible study, and fellowship over the next year. As we are moving into Advent, now is the perfect time to make a renewed commitment, especially to prayer and Bible study. The word Advent originates from the Latin word for coming. Advent is a season of preparation for the Christ child. This time of year, we adorn our houses with beautiful decorations. We sing along to the beloved Christmas carols that are played on the radio. I also invite us to tend our own souls, and to remember the "Reason for the Season."

It is intimidating to many of us to think about becoming more engaged in our devotional life. How do we do it? How do we structure our time in our already busy lives to create space to encounter the Almighty? There is a practical step that I invite you to consider. It is a baby step that has the possibility for a big payoff. Within this edition of Steepleviews, you will find our Advent Devotional Guide. This is the third straight year that Randy and I have worked on putting together this guide for your use during Advent. Each day, the guide highlights a particular ministry of our church, a way in which our members are putting their faith in Christ into action, making this community and this world a better place. As I look over the list, it inspires me to see how much good we are accomplishing as partners together. There is also a Scripture reading assigned for each day.

Advent is 24 days this year. I invite you to put the Advent Devotional Guide in some quiet spot in your home. Keep the

guide in the same location. Place a candle there. Light the candle, as a symbol for the light of Christ. Then pray briefly for God to grant you the gift of the Holy Spirit. Next, read the Scripture lesson assigned for the day. As you read the passage, ask yourself: what is God communicating to me through this holy text?

Finally read the daily prayer and pray for the individual or group listed; also please lift up to God any of your own personal prayer requests.

My suggestions are very concrete and specific, not because this is the one and only right way to read the devotional use this Advent Guide that works better for you, please do so. If you have another devotional practice that is meaningful to you that does not involve this guide, more power to you. My ultimate goal in this article is to encourage each of us to find ways to connect with our Almighty, alive, ever-present Lord. I am have been specific to offer you one model, one place to start.

The steps I suggest should take less than 15 minutes per day. I am tempted to try to convince you to do this by saying how little time it will take, but I do not think that is the right approach. We should not simply look to give God our leftovers.

Several previous occasions during Lent and Advent, I have committed myself to a daily devotional. It has not always been easy to keep up, but in the end, I have always felt that God has accomplished something significant through my willingness to carve out a space to listen for God. So this Advent, I ask you to prepare for the coming of our Lord by making a good investment of your time through prayer and Bible study.

Peace in Christ,  
Jody

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## Happy Birthday in

### December to:

- 1 Anne Vipperman, Morgan Haley
- 2 Margaret Hotchkiss, Erik Stegall
- 3 Dru Rothrock
- 4 Ashby Pritchett, Debra Easley
- 5 Mary Mac Knighton
- 6 Wallace Haskins, Keith Sanders, Roslyn Ramsey, Katherine Lester
- 8 Lyn Davis
- 9 Joan Montgomery, Chris Wingfield, Jack Adkins
- 10 Betsy Haskins, Marion Miller
- 11 John Kuhn
- 12 Brian Williams, Ron Dailey
- 14 Merv King
- 15 Kim Boyd
- 17 Matthew Mason
- 18 Bill Kirby
- 19 Beth Chapman
- 20 Claire Adkins
- 21 John Philpott
- 22 Jeb Bowles, Vera Jane Kuhn, Grayson Russell
- 24 Jackie McLachlan
- 26 Smith Chaney
- 27 Nancy Moore, Cathy Stone, Gael Chaney
- 28 Doc Altizer, Brenda Williams
- 29 Denise Unterbrink, Lucy Wilson, Kimberly Toothman

### and in January to

- 1 Nancy Philpott
- 4 Melissa Seamon, Marie Thompson, Vicki Easley
- 5 Katherine Earles, Ashley Pruitt
- 6 John Chappell, Iliene Hite, Lea Washburn
- 7 Buck Flythe, Rob King
- 8 Stan Cobb

## IN MEMORIAM

Juliet Moscati Pichirallo June 8, 1925 - November 7, 2007

**SYMPATHY** of the congregation is extended to Richard and Donna Lawhon and family on the death of Donna's mother, Juliet Moscati Pichirallo, November 7, 2007, in Martinsville. Juliet, a member of First Presbyterian since June 24, 2001, joined the Church Triumphant on November 7, 2007.

**CONGRATULATIONS** to Sam and Margaret Mattox on the birth of their daughter, Lucy Helen Mattox, on November 4, 2007, in Charleston, South Carolina. A.C. and Lucy Wilson are the proud grandparents, Harriet Mattox is the great-grandmother and Judy Mattox the step grandmother!

## New Consecration Sunday

A big "THANKS!" goes out to all who participated in the New Consecration Sunday emphasis last month. We really appreciate all who worked behind the scenes to make Sunday, November 11, a very special day in the life of our congregation - the worship service with our General Presbyter, the Rev. Dr. Nancy Dawson, was special, and the catered meal was delicious and delightful. And, of course, thank you to all who filled out an Estimate of Giving card to enable us to do Christ's work in 2008. The early results are both encouraging and promising; and, we still hope to hear from others before the final results can be tallied.

Again, thank you one and all for your enthusiastic support and strong commitment to the life and ministry of our church.



## Children and Youth Music

Dear Friends, what a joyful time this is! So many wonderful things taking place for us at First Presbyterian. The children are working so hard on our play, "Christmas in Reverse." I am so proud of them-it is going to be awesome. We had a superb rehearsal yesterday. Please come out and support the children and do yourself a favor in the meantime. You may think you have seen children's pageants, but you have never seen one like this one. We have dancers, a new set, singers and actors and actresses that are responding far beyond years!

The big event will be on December 2nd at 7 pm. A nursery will be provided and a reception will follow. If you need a ride, please call me. I will be delighted to make arrangements for you. I want to put a plug in for the Adult program on December 16th. I have recently begun singing with the choir, and it is a real joy. Bob has chosen beautiful, meaningful music and the plans are coming along really well. You will want to continue your journey to the manger with this program as well.

I was fortunate to be a part of the planning team for Advent workshop. We had a ball. So many people made the evening wonderful. Shane Pinkston and sons, Ben and Max, provided a wonderful meal that everyone enjoyed. It took all day, and they gladly gave their time and talents.

Thanks so much guys! The Fellowship committee set up and cleaned up and that was a huge job. Thank each one of you for contributing your time and talent as well.

The workshops were well attended and successful. Everyone went home with something meaningful to keep. The fellowship was lovely and new friendships were begun.

The brains of the Workshop are Bonnie Price and Susan Smith. They worked diligently and willingly in preparation for the event. There were a lot of details to take care of, and they never missed a beat! Thanks girls. Leading workshops besides Bonnie and Susan were Sarah Altizer and Joanne Sanders. Thank you for your help. It was a wonderful evening.

I hope that this Christmas is a time of peace, joy and hope for you and your family as we walk to the miracle of Jesus' birth together.

In joy  
Betsy

## ANNUAL JOY GIFT OFFERING

will be on Sunday, December 16 and December 23.

Special envelopes will be available in the pew racks. Those who benefit from this offering are retired church workers and students of our Presbyterian-related ethnic schools. Your gift will support these valuable ongoing ministries.



### Christmas Breakfast and Tree Decorating

Fellowship Hall  
December 2, 9:30 A.M.

Combined Sunday School at 10:00 A.M.

### Children's Christmas Program

December 2, 7:00 P.M.  
"Christmas in Reverse"

### A Service of Lessons and Carols

Chancel Choir  
December 16, 6:30 P.M.

**Family Christmas Eve Service**

December 24, 5:00 P.M.

**Candlelight Christmas Eve Service**

December 24, 7:30 P.M.

**No Sunday School**

Sunday, December 30  
congregation will gather in the sanctuary  
at 10:30 A.M. to sing Christmas  
carols and hymns around the piano.

